

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 959

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 6783

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOCI, CI, PFOR, US

SUBJ: ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL

REF: SANTIAGO 5039

1. SUMMARY. DURING NOV 6 MEETING, MINED CASTRO SHOWED HOLY CROSS REPS STRONGLY WORDED LETTER DTD NOV 4 FROM CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL PINOCHET TO FATHER HESBURGH. LETTER REJECTED PROPOSED LIST OF NEW HOLY CROSS PERSONNEL FOR ST. GEORGE'S, ARGUED CONGREGATION HAD NOT FULFILLED ITS OBLIGATIONS TO GOC, AND STRONGLY IMPLIED GOC WILL RESOLVE ST. GEORGE'S PROBLEM UNILATERALLY. MEETING WAS PRECEDED BY SEVERAL EXCHANGES OF CORRESPONDENCE WHICH DID NOT CHANGE BASIC SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. FATHER FERMIN DONOSO INFORMED EMBOFFS LATE NOV 6 OF MEETING EARLIER IN DAY BETWEEN HIMSELF, HOLY CROSS LAWYER, AND MINED ADM. CASTRO ARRANGED AT LATTER'S REQUEST. CASTRO SHOWED THEM LETTER FROM PINOCHET TO FR. HESBURGH DATED NOV 4 BUT DID NOT GIVE THEM COPY. ACCORDING TO DONOSO, LETTER REJECTD LIST OF NEW ST. GEORGE'S PERSONNEL PROPOSED BY HOLY CROSS ORDER (STATE 194430) ON GROUND THAT AT LEAST SEVEN OF THE 15 WERE CONTROVERSIAL ("CONFLICTIVO"), IN VIOLATION OF JULY 14 PINOCHET/HESBURGH AGREEMENT. FURTHER, LETTER CONTINUED, RETURN OF FR. PLASKER TO CHILE (SANTIAGO 5670), CONGREGATION'S "UNFOUNDED" COMPLAINTS AGAINST ST. GEORGE'S INTERVENTOR COMANDANTE VERDUGO, AND

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ANTI-JUNTA COMMENTS BY HOLY CROSS PRIESTS SHOW THAT HOLY

CROSS ORDER HAS NOT FULFILLED ITS PART OF BARGAIN. IN VIEW OF ABOVE, LETTER CONCLUDED, GOC WILL TAKE "DEFINITIVE MEASURES" (CORTE DEFINITIVO), UNSPECIFIED, TO RESOLVE ST. GEORGE'S SITUATION. LETTER ALSO APPARENTLY CONTAINED ANNEX, NOT SHOWN TO DONOSO, PREPARED BY MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ENTITLED "BACKGROUND ON THE PRIESTS."

3. DONOSO LIMITED HIS BRIEF RESPONSE TO OBSERVATION THAT "CONFLICTIVOS" GOC HAD PREVIOUSLY CITED BY NAME HAD BEEN ELIMINATED FROM NEW PERSONNEL LIST. HE WAS NOT TOLD WHICH WERE THE OFFENDING NAMES.

4. DONOSO COMMENTED TO EMBOFFS THAT SITUATION IS NOW "WORSE THAN EVER" IN THAT GOC APPEARS TO BE "GOING AFTER" ENTIRE HOLY CROSS ORDER RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL PRIESTS AS PREVIOUSLY. HE INTERPRETED PINOCHET'S LETTER AS A TRIUMPH FOR HARDLINERS WHO OPPOSE ANY RESTITUTION OF ST. GEORGES TO CONGREGATION. DONOSO SAID HE IS PRESENTLY TAKING A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE PENDING FURTHER GOC ACTION AND/OR INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS SUPERIORS. HE HAS INFORMED HOLY CROSS PROVINCIAL LEADERS IN UNITED STATES BY TELEPHONE OF CASTRO MEETING AND PINOCHET LETTER.

5. FR. DONOSO HAD CALLED ON EMBOFF OCT 29 TO BRING US UP TO DATE ON ST. GEORGES' SITUATION AS OF THAT TIME AND SINCE LAST SITREP (REFTEL). SAID LIST OF NEW ST. GEORGE'S PERSONNEL ASSIGNED BY HOLY CROSS, TRANSMITTED BY STATE 194430, WAS PRESENTED TO MINED CASTRO IN EARLY SEPT. IN RESPONSE TO HOLY CROSS FOLLOW-UP INQUIRIES AFTER SEPT HOLIDAYS, CASTRO PLEADED THAT COMMANDANTE VERDUGO, HIS "ADVISER" ON ST. GEORGE'S, WAS SERIOUSLY ILL (HE IS).

6. ACCORDING TO DONOSO, FR. HESBURGH WROTE GEN. PINOCHET IN LATE SEPT INQUIRING WHY JULY 14 AGREEMENT ON RETURN OF SCHOOL HAS NOT YET BEEN HONORED. DONOSO SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED LETTER DATED OCT 1 SIGNED BY COL. ENRIQUE MOREL, PINOCHET'S AIDE-DE-CAMP, WHICH STATED LIST OF NEW FACULTY MEMBERS SUBMITTED BY HOLY CROSS WAS "UNDER STUDY BY THE COMPETENT ORGANIZATIONS IN ORDER TO MATERIALIZE
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THE RESTITUTION OF ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL TO THE HOLY CROSS CONGREGATION." CASTRO, MEANWHILE, CONTINUED TO PLEAD VERDUGO'S ILLNESS AS REASON FOR NON-ACTION BY HIS MINISTRY.

7. ON OCT 15, DONOSO SENT CASTRO LETTER NOTING NEED TO MAKE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEW SCHOOL YEAR WHICH STARTS IN MARCH, AND REQUESTING HIS IMMEDIATE

ATTENTION TO PROBLEM. NO DIRECT ANSWER HAD BEEN RECEIVED. IN MEANTIME, ACCORDING TO DONOSO, PRESENT ST. GEORGE'S ADMINISTRATORS ISSUED A CIRCULAR ANNOUNCING A NEW SINGLE FEE SCHEDULE FOR NEXT YEAR RATHER THAN ST. GEORGE'S TRADITIONAL SLIDING SCALE. DONOSO COMMENTED THAT, SINCE NEW TUITION WILL PRESUMABLY BE HIGH, CHILDREN FROM LOWER INCOME GROUPS WOULD BE BARRED, THEREBY CONTRAVENING ONE OF BASIC PURPOSES OF THE SCHOOL.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: PRIOR TO DONOSO VISIT NOV 6, AMB POUCHED LETTER TO FR. HESBURGH REPLYING TO ONE FROM HIM IN WHICH HESBURGH WAS OPTIMISTIC ON THE BASIS OF THE OCT 1 MOREL LETTER. DEPT MAY WISH TO INFORM HESBURGH OF THE RECENT LESS FAVORABLE TURN OF EVENTS.
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